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NEWS RELEASE

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SOUTH LANIKAI BEACH GETS NEW SAND THROUGH PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Today the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the City and County of Honolulu held a news conference to announce the completion of an initial beach nourishment project at Lanikai Beach, O`ahu.

The demonstration project added between 10,000 and 12,000 cubic yards of sand to the south end of Lanikai beach where sandbags had temporarily been used to protect homes and beachfront property from continued shoreline erosion. Over the past few decades, Lanikai beach has suffered from sand loss which has severely narrowed portions of the 1 1/2-mile long beach.

The loss of Hawai`i's sandy beaches is a major social, economic and environmental problem, which has affected nearly 25%, or 17 miles, of O`ahu's beaches, including Lanikai.

"The Lanikai community has been struggling to find solutions to the erosion problem, and recently sought the help of DLNR and the City and County to initiate a beach nourishment project," said Sam Lemmo, DLNR coastal lands program manager. "As an interim measure, the community was granted permits to construct a temporary sand bag retention system."

To develop a more permanent fix, the City and County, DLNR and the UH School of Ocean, Earth and Science Technology worked cooperatively to replenish the beach using dredged sand from Ka`elepulu Stream in Kailua, where the City and County cleared a sand glut in and around the stream mouth.

"This was a win-win project," commented Lemmo. "Sand was needed at Lanikai to test the feasibility of beach nourishment at the eroding beach, and the City and County needed to dispose of sand from a dredging project at a nearby stream.

"As a result, we were able to do two things: restore sand to the shrinking coastline of the popular beach; and, prove that beach nourishment is a viable and effective method of protecting and enhancing our sandy shorelines," explained Lemmo. "We also learned a lot from the project that will help guide us in the future as we address similar erosion problems elsewhere."

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The demonstration project provided about half of the total amount of sand that will be needed to more fully nourish south Lanikai beach. Additional funds and alternative sources of sand need to be secured in order to expand the nourishment project.

"Curbing beach loss and coastal erosion is critical to Hawai`i's future," said Lemmo. "White, sandy beaches are undoubtedly one of Hawai`i's greatest assets. Not only do our beaches afford residents with recreation and access to the ocean, they also protect us from storm surges and tsunamis and provide habitat for many marine species. Economically, they attract visitors from around the globe who come to Hawai`i to experience their pleasures and beauty. Unfortunately, we are losing them at at a staggering rate."

Aside from natural factors which can cause erosion, the primary cause of beach loss in Hawai`i is shoreline hardening -- the construction of shoreline structures like seawalls, revetments, and improperly placed groins and breakwaters. Lemmo notes that these structures are generally built for legitimate reasons -- to protect homes, hotels, roads, and public facilities. However, the unintended side-effect is beach loss.

"But working with the counties and the federal government, DLNR and the University of Hawaii established a new Coastal Lands Program to protect and restore the state's beaches and find innovative ways to prevent future loss," Lemmo continued. "The Lanikai project is part of this effort."

The Coastal Lands Program was established in 1997 to develop a strategic and comprehensive framework to protect and conserve Hawai`i's beaches. The program's aim is to strike a balance between coastal development and beach conservation by finding alternatives to shoreline hardening, such as beach and sand dune restoration, strategic redevelopment of coastal areas, and coastal land acquisition.

Last year, the program championed new legislation which provided a one-time appropriation of $250,000 and established a fund into which fees, fines and donations can be collected to support research and restoration programs.

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